Conducting Research for the Interview

Researching Employers

Employers expect you to know about the organization and understand the position for which you are interviewing. Thorough research enables you to understand the organization's needs so that you may best market yourself. It also helps you answer the critical question of why you would like to work for that employer and helps you formulate intelligent and appropriate questions to ask in your interview. Here are ways for you to research specific employers:

- **Talk to people:** Find people who work for or know about the organization. This could be people you meet at a Career Fair, family members, neighbors, parents of friends, students who graduated ahead of you, and alumni contacts.
- **The employer's web site**: This is a no-brainer! Look for basic facts, information about mission, culture, values and more.
- **Internet research:** Note sources of information you find and gauge the credibility of those sources.
- **Call or write the organization and ask for information:** Only AFTER you've searched for it elsewhere without success. This is perfectly appropriate to do if you simply cannot find information about the organization through their web site, or if the information is not clear.
- **Be careful**: If you e-mail with a question to which you could have found the answer online with a little effort, you'll be perceived negatively as a potential employee (lazy, unintelligent, etc.). As a potential employee, you want to be perceived as a person who does work, not creates more for someone else.

Preparing Your Own Questions

At the end of the interview, you will typically be given the opportunity to ask questions. To show your interest in the position and company, develop thoughtful questions related to the job, organization, or selection process ahead of time. Keep the focus away from your own needs (don't ask about salary or benefits), and always remember to ask what the next step is. Here are a few sample questions to ask, but it will be worth your while to formulate questions specific to the company as well:

1. How did this position become available?
2. What would you like done differently by the next person who fills this position?
3. What are some of the greater challenges an individual has to face in this position?
4. What orientation/training is offered to new employees?
5. What are the opportunities for advancement in this position and this organization?
6. What opportunities exist for professional growth and development?
7. What are short/long term needs of this department/organization?
8. Why do you like working for in this department/this organization?
9. What opportunities exist to collaborate with individuals from other departments/offices, or to share ideas?
10. What is your timeline for making a hiring decision?